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SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES

Progress report by the Director-General

Summary

Reports on progress made in the formulation and implementation of the Special Programme for Industrial Development in the Arab Countries, in particular concerning activities carried out in response to General Conference resolution GC.4/Res.5.

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Introduction

1. The General Conference at its fourth session adopted resolution GC.4/Res.5 in which it took note of the progress report by the Director-General (GC.4/27) and requested him to formulate the Special Programme so as to address regional activities devoted to increased industrial cooperation among Arab countries as well as activities aimed at meeting the urgent needs of the Arab least developed countries. The Director-General was also requested to ensure that the programme activities address the priorities of: training and development of human resources; standardization and quality control; development of technological functions and capacity; marketing and trade in industrial products; industrial information; and agro- and agro-based industries (para. 3 of the resolution). Other requests related to the need to secure the necessary funds for the speedy implementation of the identified projects, to enhance the capabilities of the Arab Countries Programme in the Secretariat to cope with the increased demands of the activities of the Special Programme, and to ensure the full collaboration of the specialized Arab organizations to formulate and follow up the activities of the Programme.

2. The present report on progress achieved in implementing the above requests is submitted to the General Conference at its fifth session through the Board at its tenth session in compliance with paragraph 8 of resolution GC.4/Res.5.

I. ELABORATION OF THE SPECIAL PROGRAMME

3. Pursuant to paragraph 2 of General Conference resolution GC.4/Res.5, UNIDO has initiated activities to assess the immediate needs for closer industrial cooperation among Arab States as well as the needs of the Arab least developed countries.

4. The main activity carried out by UNIDO for that purpose in 1992 was the Inter-agency Meeting for the Special Programme for Industrial Development in the Arab Countries convened in Vienna from 26 to 28 February in cooperation with the League of Arab States (LAS), the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO) and the United Nations Economic and Social

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Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). Participants in the meeting comprised representatives from those regional organizations, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Fund for International Development, a number of Arab national institutions and permanent missions of Arab States to UNIDO. The meeting focused on the elaboration of the components of the Special Programme, the selection of priorities from among proposals for technical cooperation projects, the preparation of a plan of action for the 1992-1993 biennium, and the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Special Programme.

5. The discussions at the meeting were based on a working paper prepared by a UNIDO consultant on these matters and a set of 14 project profiles prepared jointly by UNIDO, AIDMO and ESCWA that covered, inter alia, development of human resources, standardization and quality control, technological development, and industrial information. Guidelines and a plan of action were formulated for the Special Programme for the 1992-1993 biennium and agreement was reached on certain organizational arrangements aimed at achieving closer cooperation and coordination between UNIDO and the regional collaborating organizations with a view to expanding and promoting industrial activities under the Special Programme. It was agreed that UNIDO, AIDMO, LAS and ESCWA would in future meet twice a year to review the progress of the implementation of the programme and to discuss their contribution and commitments to the new activities and projects. The next meeting is scheduled to take place at Cairo, Egypt, at LAS headquarters, in September/October 1992.

6. Copies of the report of the inter-agency meeting (PPD.222(SPEC.)), which was distributed to all Arab regional and international organizations concerned upon finalization, are available with the Secretariat.

7. With regard to the request addressed to the Director-General in paragraph 5 of Conference resolution GC.4/Res.5 to enhance the capabilities of the Arab countries programme in the Secretariat, more effective utilization of the staff has been undertaken including redistribution of staff assignments. Furthermore, a high-level consultant was recruited to help elaborate more specifically the components of the Special Programme, consolidate the project profiles and work out the plan of action of the current biennium.

II. PROJECTS COMPLETED OR UNDER CONSIDERATION

8. Since the adoption of General Conference resolution GC.4/Res.5, UNIDO has approved and implemented a number of activities in the areas falling under the priorities identified in paragraph 3 of the resolution, e.g.:

(a) Joint UNIDO/Arab School of Science and Technology (ASST) workshop on composites and advanced materials: development and technology (Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, 16-22 February 1992);

(b) National workshop on cost accounting in the food industry (Khartoum, Sudan, 1-12 December 1991);

(c) Workshop on industrial project preparation, evaluation and the application of the UNIDO Computer Model for Feasibility Analysis and Reporting (COMFAR) (Cairo, Egypt, 2-3 December 1991);

(d) Regional workshop on maintenance of textile machinery for Arab least developed countries (Alexandria, Egypt), approved and to be implemented in the near future;

(e) Joint UNIDO/ASST workshop on information technology and applications (Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, 25-31 May 1992);

(f) Consultancy services regarding the establishment of a data bank for the Arab Railways Union;

(g) Consultancy services regarding the establishment of a data bank for the Arab Union for Cement and Building Materials (AUCBM).

9. In cooperation with the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries (Lebanon) a project formulation mission was fielded to prepare a project document for the establishment of a regional trade information centre at Beirut and the project is now ready and under active consideration by UNIDO. Another mission was fielded to the Syrian Arab Republic to identify new projects and prepare documents for a number of projects previously discussed in relation with the activities described in paragraph 8 (f) and (g) above. As a result, project documents have been prepared for:

(a) The establishment of a data bank for the Arab Railways Union;

(b) The establishment of a data bank for AUCBM;

(c) The Arab School of Science and Technology concerning:

(i) The establishment of an industrial data bank;

(ii) The establishment of a centre for software development, training and marketing;

(iii) New and renewable sources of energy;

(iv) The establishment of an Arab materials research centre.

These project documents are currently being appraised and considered for approval in the light of available resources.

10. At the inter-agency meeting mentioned above, some of the Arab regional organizations indicated that they may contribute to the financing of certain projects through cost sharing arrangements with UNIDO. Pending concrete decisions in that respect, the mobilization of financial resources will be pursued further with all financing agencies in the region. Joint efforts will also continue with the Arab League, AIDMO and other organizations in order to develop the activities of the Special Programme and secure the required financial resources.

III. ACTION REQUIRED OF THE BOARD

11. The Board may wish to take note of the present report and provide guidance for further action.